

IN THE CLAIMS

For the convenience of the Examiner, all claims have been presented whether or not an amendment has been made.

1-25. (Canceled)

26. (Previously Presented) An audio conferencing method comprising:
receiving audio data from a source audio client;

attenuating the received audio data based on audio decay characteristics to simulate a distance between the source audio client and a target audio client, wherein each audio client is assigned a selected decay characteristic of a plurality of predefined decay characteristics; and

delivering the attenuated audio data to the target audio client.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein the target audio client is the same as the source audio client.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein the target audio client is different than the source audio client.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 28, further comprising delivering the attenuated data to the source audio client.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein the source and target audio clients are displayed as points on a viewing screen from which sound appears to emanate.

31. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30, wherein the source audio client comprises a point source audio (~~PSA~~) client that originates from stored audio data.

32. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 31, wherein the point source audio client ~~PSA~~ includes point sources of sound from a file or user input.

33. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30, wherein the source audio client comprises a set-top box (~~STB~~) audio client ~~the~~ that originates from an audio conferencing user.

34. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 33, wherein the set-top box audio client ~~STB~~ includes a set-top application for controlling audio data from a microphone or speaker.

35. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30, wherein the target audio client comprises a set-top box (~~STB~~) audio client that originates from an audio conferencing user.

36. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 35, wherein the set-top box audio client ~~STB~~ includes a set-top application for controlling audio data from a microphone or speaker.

37. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein a plurality of audio clients participate in an audio conference.

38. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26, further comprising managing one or more audio conferences using an Interface Definition Language (~~IDL~~) that creates and deletes conferences, adds and removes participants to and from the conferences, and changes a volume balance among participants in the conferences.

39. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein attenuating comprises identifying a decay factor for each audio client.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 39, wherein the decay factor is a customized decay factor.

41. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 39, wherein attenuating further comprises determining a weighted value between the source audio client and the target audio

client based on the source audio client's decay factor.

42. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 41, wherein attenuating further comprises calculating a mix for the audio clients using the weighted values.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42, wherein attenuating further comprises refining the mix for the audio clients by adjusting a plurality of audio data functions such as gain control, fade in/fade out, floating point operation elimination, mixing adaption, mixing cut-off, and stream audio.

44. (Currently Amended) Computer software, stored on a computer-readable medium, ~~for an audio conference server (ACS), the software~~ comprising instructions for causing a computer processor to perform the following operations:

receive audio data from a source audio client;

attenuate the received audio data based on audio decay characteristics to simulate a distance between the source audio client and a target audio client, wherein each audio client is assigned a selected decay characteristic of a plurality of predefined decay characteristics; and

deliver the attenuated audio data to the target audio client.

45. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26 ~~claim 1~~, wherein the selected decay characteristic comprises a selected decay factor.